

SALMAGUNDI, No. VI.

Saturday, October 2, 1819.

FROM MY ELBOW CHAIR.

THAT man is in my opinion truly fortunate, who amid the frivolous pursuits, artificial enjoyments, and heartless follies which allure him on every side, preserves a taste for the pure and simple pleasures of a country life. Whether he devotes himself to the cultivation of those productions which are necessary to the existence of his fellow creatures, or amuses his leisure hours in watching the progress of his flowers, or beautifying the little world where centre all his enjoyments, still to him the beneficent Creator has been most bountiful, by giving a source of innocent happiness, awakened by the contemplation of rural objects every where spread over the face of nature, and fed by the purest springs of moral and intellectual feeling.

From my very boyhood, it has been my peculiar happiness to share the friendship and affec-

tion of a worthy gentleman, whose gentle virtues and singular turn of mind, will furnish me with a happy illustration of the foregoing observations. He inherited from nature a mind of uncommon strength, as well as singular benevolence of heart, but owing to various circumstances, to his living much within the boundaries of his own territories, and exercising unlimited authority therein, his strength of mind and goodness of disposition, have branched out into various peculiarities, all characteristic of the best feelings, however whimsically displayed.

His ancestors were among the first christian settlers of this fair and fertile isle, and unlike most of their worthy cotemporaries, preserved their lands entire, although often tempted by the mighty speculators of the times, to sell them and become paupers in the third generation. My old friend inherited the whole, free from bond, note or mortgage, and has retained them to the present time, when in consequence of the near approach of the city, they have become a valuable estate. I question however, whether, this immense increase of wealth, makes him amends for the vexations the inroad of the town occasions him. Numerous are the border wars, the watchings and inventions to which he is obliged to resort, in order to protect his subjects from

the raids of the moss troopers of Greenwich, the Bowery, and Kip's Bay; and I have great doubts whether any of the renowned commanders of ancient or modern times, ever devised more excellent stratagems to circumvent their enemies. Truth obliges me to confess however, that not one of them ever succeeded, except in a single instance, where he caught a fellow in his fowl house, by means of a contrivance of such singular excellence, that in going to secure the culprit, my old friend was himself caught in the same trap. Being thus unintentionally placed in bad company, he made the best of his situation, by entering into conversation with his neighbour, who gave such an affecting account of the distresses of his family, that the old gentleman became an accomplice in robbing his own hen roost, and actually bestowed two of his fattest pullets upon the rogue. He denies this story, but I give the reader my word it is true.

One of the most amusing peculiarities of this excellent old gentleman, is an extravagant fondness for the whole animal creation. His old mansion is a kind of ark, inhabited by almost every variety of the feathered race, from the voluble and various mock-bird, to the solemn owl. His poultry yard, also abounds in a vast number of different kinds of domestic animals

and fowls, all of whom he cherishes with a sort of parental affection, and among whom he administers justice, with the sagacity, and uprightness of a Marshall. Such indeed is the mildness, yet vigour of his administration, that I have often looked upon him in the light of a mighty potentate, exercising an affectionate and patriarchal sway, over his numerous and party coloured subjects, and have more than once been tempted to hold him up as an example to the present race of kings, being fully persuaded, that the same equitable system of legislation exercised over the human race, would produce a degree of happiness among my fellow creatures, to which they are almost every where strangers. It is quite impossible for me to afford myself space, for a full development of all the little acts of state policy, practised in the government of his animal kingdom. The reader must be content with a brief account of some of the leading features, which will however be amply sufficient to show the excellence of his system.

Like all wise rulers, his great object is to preserve peace and union among his subjects at home, and guard his frontiers from the incursions of enemies abroad. Early in the morning, you will see him walk forth like one of patriarchs of olden time. The moment he appears, his sub-

jects come running and flying in every direction to welcome his approach, and give the merry morning salutation. The poultry flutter about his feet, or perch familiarly upon his shoulder, knowing by experience the good monarch will not harm a feather of their speckled wings. The pigeons too, of which he has a great variety, fan tails, pouters, tumblers and letter-carriers, the moment they see him, descend from the air, or from the roofs of the out buildings, hovering and fluttering their congratulations; the turkies run gobbling towards him, the ducks and geese come waddling up with toes turned inward, while half a dozen dogs of various generations, but all of one family, approach wagging their tails, and leaping up to his honest old heart.

All this is pleasant enough. It is like going about among the people, and receiving addresses of congratulation, such as grateful hearts bestow on those who govern wisely and justly. But it is inconceiveable what difficulties my old friend has to encounter, and what exertions he is obliged to make to keep the peace among his motley subjects, when he administers their breakfast. I remember at one time there was a tall boasting gander, of the Chinese breed, who occasioned him a vast deal of trouble, by reason of his quarrelsome overbearing disposition,

which kept the whole kingdom in a state of utter confusion and ferment. He was at length decreed a triangular yoke, which not only mortified his pride, but also impeded the progress of his further enormities. On another occasion there was a lordly turkey-cock, who my old friend dubbed the noble lord in the red ribbon, and who like a notable bully stalked over the common people without ceremony, creating great confusion, and sometimes trampling on the little chickens. I shall never forget the exultation of the old gentleman, when a favourite game chicken of the Delancey breed, attacked the bully one morning and gave him such a sound drubbing, that he always kept the peace afterwards. The gray haired monarch, like another Bonaparte, immediately erected one of his barn yards into an independent kingdom, which he decreed to this valiant champion, together with a seraglio of half a dozen of his plump pullets. There is a wise looking owl, which has been attached to the court of the old gentleman for nearly fifty years past, and whom he calls his minister of police. His functions consist in the particular superintendence of the kingdom at night, when he prowls about like a trusty watchman, detecting the rats and weasels in their depredations, and putting martial law in force

against them. On one occasion however, he was caught in the fact of eating a favourite pup spaniel, and in consequence of this abuse of power, was for some time confined to a hollow apple tree, like a disgraced Spanish minister in the tower of Segovia.

One fine morning last spring, I walked out to pay a visit, to this exemplary monarch, and found him in one of his best humours. He shook my hand with great glee, exclaiming at the same time, "They are come—they are come!" "What your grand-sons from school," replied I. "No—no—the martens—dont you hear the little rogues twittering on the box yonder?" Honest, pure soul—thought I—Happy, thrice happy, in the virtuous simplicity, which can banquet on such cheap and innocent gratifications! Just then a tumbler pigeon flew high in the air, and according to the singular instinct of that curious bird, poised itself for a moment, and throwing a somerset backwards, descended again to the infinite delight of the monarch, who talked of bestowing a new coop on the occasion, and rewarded the feat with a handful of grain, of which the rest of his courtiers, according to custom, managed to get the best share. I am of opinion, that my friend enjoyed this feat, with much greater zest, than if he had seen the clown at the

circus exhibit those wonderful evolutions, which a discerning public rewarded, not long since, with a benefit of twelve hundred dollars.

We now went in to breakfast, where the good man entertained me with a long account of the wars between the pigeons and martens, the guelphs and ghibelines of his commonwealth, who alternately turned each other out of house and home. The injuries inflicted on the swallows, by the martens, were also another fruitful source of difficulty. "Plague take them," said he, in the tone of a fond parent, affecting to find fault with a favoured urchin who quarrels with his school-fellows—"Plague take them. I believe they would master my whole territory, if it were not for a little wren who is a perfect Bonaparte, and who I shall be obliged to send to St. Helena, if he dont keep the peace. There is no telling you, what trouble I have with these three conflicting powers, the pigeons, the martens and the little wren, who seems a match for all together."

When breakfast was over, after examining his aviary, turning the eggs of his canary birds-nests, feeding the young orphans, for whose safety a sort of strong-hold, faced with wire is constructed at one end of the room, and playing a few tunes on the organ for their instruction,

we sallied forth to inspect the farm yard, as well as the more remote frontiers. As the most perfect ruler that ever existed, always has a secret corner of his heart in which is cherished some weak partiality, that every now and then discloses itself in an undue species of favouritism, so am I obliged to confess that I have more than once detected the old gentleman, in this grievous fault. His pigeons are undoubtedly his chiefest courtiers, and it is in respect to them that the cares of sovereignty lie heaviest on his mind. These birds partake more of the foibles and caprices of human beings, than any others of the species, and the old gentleman assured me, with much gravity that he has known the domestic happiness of a worthy family entirely destroyed by a neighbouring rival, having its coop repaired and embellished. This occasioned jealousies, discontents and heart burnings, which displayed themselves in the males fighting, and the females scolding whenever they met each other.

He moreover complained to me, that very often a young rake-hell of a pouter, (the dandies of the dove cote) will obstinately refuse to unite in the bands of matrimony, with a plump heiress he has specially selected, and in spite of his efforts, persevere in a course of wicked de-

bauchery, to the utter confounding of his species and ruin of his constitution. Every day the behaviour of some one of these unworthy favourites brings my worthy friend into fresh trouble. Sometimes the children disobey their parents, by venturing out into the temptations of a bad world, before they are properly fledged, and falling to the ground a prey to cats, children, and other arch enemies that are always on the watch to entrap helpless innocence. At other times, he is put to his wits ends, in attempting to reform some wicked polygamist, who in open defiance of the laws, persists in taking to himself half a dozen wives, and as many concubines. In a word, it is my opinion, that my friend displays more of the policy of a wise magistrate, more of the uprightness of an inflexible judge, and more of the temper of a true philosopher, in keeping peace among the quarrelsome, pacifying the rebellious, reforming the profligate, providing for the orphans, affiancing the widows, and chastising the bachelors, than any one single member of the holy alliance, or indeed all of them together. By this excellent mode of recreation, he not only procures to himself a rich and abundant source of happiness, but exemplifies at the same time, as complete a system of morals and laws, as ever came from the brain of a Solon or a Lycurgus.

I must not omit to mention, before I conclude this paper, that the old gentleman by a course of experiments upon his pigeons, has become a complete convert to the doctrines of the great Isaac Bickerstaff. He assures me, that he can produce at pleasure, (that is provided they will only follow his directions) pigeons of the most whimsical, and opposite colours, and breed a fan tail with any given number of feathers in his tail, not exceeding thirty-eight, which is the ne plus ultra of nature's efforts.

After exhibiting to me a pair of choice trumpeter pigeons, he exemplified his doctrine by a history of their birth and lineage.

"Not six months ago," said he, "I got possession of that rare and beautiful bird,"—pointing to the male—but being the only one of its kind in the country, I was quite in despair, lest I should not be able to increase the stock. In this dilemma, how do you think I managed matters? i' faith, I immediately married him to a beautiful *Capuchin lady*, she being the nearest to him in affinity. The first brood was doubtful; the second gave me the liveliest hopes; and the third promised to crown my wishes, had it not been for a *black carrier*, who sat just facing her during the sympathetic period, and turned the young ones at least ten shades darker than the mother.

The fourth experiment was of course lost, in merely restoring the natural colour they had forfeited by the preceding one, and in the prosecution of the fifth, I was overtaken by a great misfortune. A strutting young libertine of a pouter captivated the affections of the lady, who consented to an elopement. All the consequences of such an imprudent step naturally followed. But to bring the affair to a conclusion, the sixth generation completely rewarded my cares, and gave me full assurance of the truth of my theory."

So saying, we continued our walks over the ample domains of our worthy potentate. The same peculiar humour, that governs the economy of his farm yard, and pigeon house, displays itself in his system of gardening and husbandry. He is always indulging himself in curious experiments, in grafting and planting, and is a firm believer in the fanciful system of Darwin. Affinities and antipathies, are carefully consulted in the disposition of his plants and vines, and he is particularly attentive in preventing all kinds of vegetable debauchery, by planting his melons, cucumbers, &c. at such a distance as to render every kind of criminal intercourse quite impossible. With a liberality truly admirable, he sows an acre of millet seed every year, by way of voluntary alms to the wild birds of the air, who

though not his subjects, annually resort to his domains in flocks that veil the clouds, with all the punctuality of pensioned courtiers, or soup house paupers. It is expected however, that they will keep terms, and refrain from all depredations on the rest of the kingdom, otherwise they may be pretty certain of being shot, with a gun at least twelve feet long, which never yet failed in committing great slaughter.

After traversing many well cultivated fields, we at length ascended a pretty high hill, commanding an extensive, and variegated prospect of smiling meadows, and waving woods, putting forth their spring verdure in gay profusion. The scene naturally called up agreeable or tender associations, and the good old man, insensibly glided into a train of long past, yet happy recollections. Every field, was pointed out as the theatre of some frolicksome exploit of buxom boy-hood—here he had caught a mock bird, which sung so loud that his mother kept him in a dark room for fear of disturbing the children; there he had shot a covey of quails, and yonder, said he, under that old stump, once a spreading oak, I used to sit of an evening, with one who was my mistress in youth, my wife in manhood, my staff in age, and who is now an angel in Heaven.

As I walked home that evening, and saw the busy crowds of the city panting in tides and eddies in all directions, and pursuing pleasure, through every avenue of pain, at the expense of ease and comfort, often at the sacrifice of health, fortune and fame, the simple and amiable eccentricities of my old friend, gradually assumed the airs of sober wisdom, and, I could not help acknowledging to myself, that he was not only the happiest, but one of the most rational old men I had ever known.



“VROUWEN DAGH.”


WOMAN'S DAY.

IN rummaging the other day among some of the old archives of the hall, treating concerning the early history of this fair and excellent city, I came unexpectedly upon a singular custom, which prevailed about a century and a half ago, among our worthy ancestors. It is recorded that on Valentine's day, every young damsel was furnished with a piece of rope about a yard in

length, with which they lurked behind the corners of the streets, waiting the appearance of the young fellows, whom they were privileged to beat, until they got out of the way by running. This day of licence was called in the classical language of our early times *VROUWEN DAGH*, and it was held a disgrace for any young fellow, to return these blows with any thing but a kiss, during the period of licence. It is recorded that a smart blow, was considered a peculiar proof of regard, especially if it left a memento on the skin, which was held equivalent to those marks by which country people designate sheep and cattle as their own.

This custom continued to prevail, until about the beginning of the seventeenth century, when as the historian relates, the married women, doubtless in consequence of the unseemly liberty allowed them when single, became so grievously addicted to arrant scolding, and lectured their husbands in such a way, that a law was passed empowering the sheriff to erect a ducking stool, directly in front of the old city hall, for the purpose of restraining this liberty of speech. It was, however, taken down some years afterwards, being found unnecessary in consequence of the wonderful reformation of the sex

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about that time, which I am happy to say has continued ever since.

Reflecting the other evening on these, and other matters connected with our patriarchal age, I insensibly yielded to the influence of the dog days, and fell asleep. The human mind may be likened to a well broken steed, whose spritely gambols are restrained by a habit of submission to his rider, but who the moment he slips his rein, bounds over the fences, and riots in forbidden pastures. So with our reason; while waking, it only indulges in a few occasional curvettings; but when sleep comes, and steals away the bridle placing it in the hands of nimble fancy, we disdain the limits of possibility and triumph for a while over time and space.

I fancied myself all at once standing close by the ducking stool, erected by the before named sheriff, in front of the old city hall, at the moment the worshipful magistrate was adjudging a number of cases in which the liberty of speech had been grossly abused, by certain married ladies, as was alledged. The first offender, I remember was a goodly sized dame, of some fifty years old. She wore a little cap, partly inclining to one ear, and carried her arms a kimbo, as if in defiance both of the husband and magistrate. She was arraigned on the complaint of a

stout, brawny, weather beaten gentleman, wearing a little cocked hat, ornamented with broad copper lace. A short pipe was stuck in the button hole of his waistcoat, that bore some vestiges of lace also, and it was remarked that the circumstance of the pipe, indicated great wrath in the owner, as this was the first time he had ever been seen without carrying it in his mouth. He announced himself as the renowned Mynheer Adrian Block, the first navigator that ever sailed through Hell Gate, an adventure which he considered as nothing, compared to weathering a matrimonial gale at home. The sheriff having found out by cross questioning the parties, that the scolding arose entirely from the provoking silence of the skipper, who obstinately refused to quarrel with his wife, decreed that this was some little excuse, and dismissed her with a caution. Before she got fairly out of hearing, however, she attacked Mynheer Block so vigorously, that the magistrate ordered her back, and sentenced her to a ducking.

The next culprit, was a brisk snub nosed skinny little dame, with peculiarly sharp black eyes that boded no good. Her husband, one Wyngaard, stated that he kept the sign of *Santa Claas*, near the corner of the *Cherry Garden*, and that he was doing pretty well, till his wife drove away

all his customers, by scolding from morning to night. The little woman urged as an offset, that her husband did nothing but tipple with every person that came into the house. She would not have minded this so much, had he drank out of his customers cup, but the gentleman forsooth must treat in his turn, by means of which he was bringing them to poverty, and the only method she could think of to prevent his begging her-self and children, was to drive people away, as soon as possible. The sheriff hereupon decreed Mynheer Wyngaard, a sound ducking at the hands of his wife, which was administered to the great content of Mrs. Block, who stood shaking her feathers like an old hen in a corner.

A man now came up leading a fashionable lady with red clocks to her stockings, and little square silver buckels to her shoes, the heels whereof, to the best of my recollection, were nearly six inches high. From these indications, I judged her to be a person of consequence, especially as the sheriff nodded his head to the husband, as he came up to make his complaint. The lady appeared with such an air of modesty, that I confess I felt interested in her favour, but it being satisfactorily proved, that she waked her husband several nights in succession, only to lecture him for snoring, the whole assembly

murmured her condemnation, and the poor lady underwent the penalty, of thus interfering with the unalienable birthright of a genuine Dutchman.

The next offender, was brought by a person carrying a broken pipe in his hand. He announced himself as the keeper of the old Ferry house in Broad street, to which highly important situation he had been appointed, as his worship well knew, for his unrivalled skill in blowing the horn. Though his wife was reckoned the greatest shrew in the whole street, he had managed to get the better of her by blowing his horn stoutly, whenever she talked too loud, until that very morning, when on taking up his instrument to argue with her, she actually knocked his pipe out of his mouth, an offence not to be tolerated in a christian community. The good woman denied the charge with unparalleled volubility, but the broken pipe was considered conclusive. The offence being enormous, she was sentenced to two duckings.

The severity of this infliction created a solemn pause, and seemed to have a great effect on the by-standers. During the dead silence, a middle aged citizen, of a quiet inoffensive physiognomy, came forward and lodged a grievous complaint against his wife. It seems she was an

heiress, having brought him as a marriage portion, a cow, a feather bed, and a black silk gown. On the strength of this dowry, she run into every kind of extravagance, buying two gowns a year, and changing the fashion of her dress, every four or five years, to the great scandal of the neighbourhood, as well as the ruin of his fortune. Whenever he refused her money to supply these enormous caprices, she always threw the cow, the feather bed, and the silk gown in his teeth, so that though her fortune was gone long ago, he was likely never to hear the last of it, while he lived. The popular feeling seemed very strong against this offender, and every one pronounced her worthy a ducking, which was, however, remitted on the score of her being a great heiress, and brought up like a lady. The magistrate decided, that she should be shut up a couple of days, with the lady of the broken pipe, who appeared so discontented with the alledged partiality of the sheriff, that it was shrewdly suspected there would be some smart sparring between them.

The next case was a very curious one. The person complained of, had it seems lost her speech several years before, by some accident I dont recollect, but the complainant alledged, that notwithstanding this, she had a most em-

phatick way of making herself understood, by a box on the ear, or some equally expressive gesture. The sheriff having neither law books, or lawyers to decide the question whether a dumb lady could possibly come under the act, seemed inclined to dismiss the complaint, when a person who had just drove up in an old chair, and who I understood was a famous physician, begged to propose a plan of settling this difficult question. As the poor woman could not enter upon her own defence, it seemed rather hard to duck her on the charge of being a shrew; he therefore suggested her being ducked by way of experiment, as he had known instances of persons recovering their speech by the sudden shock from cold water. Every body seeming to think this a capital plan, except the husband, who appeared rather alarmed concerning the event of the experiment, it was accordingly put in execution, with the most complete success. The moment the shock had passed, the patient announced her recovery by a volley, which caused the husband to retreat with great precipitation. Being apparently determined to make herself amends for lost time, she next attacked the sheriff with such vigour, that the worthy magistrate was fain to break up the court, and dismiss the by-standers rather unceremoniously. At

this moment, methought she cast her eye on me, with such a peculiar expression of hostility, that I considered my time as having actually come. The very idea of the approaching storm, caused such a trepidation, that I suddenly awoke, and mistook Mrs. Cockloft, for the dumb lady, so fully was I impressed with my dream.

I WAS agreeably surprised yesterday, at receiving the following from Anthony Evergreen, who is just returned from visiting an old friend residing in a small village, at any distance from this city, the reader chooses.

THE COUNTRY VILLAGE.

ALMOST every country village has a knot of worthy gossips, male and female, whose special employment consists in initiating young inexperienced people into a knowledge of the value of a good name, by robbing them of it as early as possible. It may perhaps be alledged in their defence, that they do this with the very best intentions, and from a belief, that as the loss of for-

tune, is very often a great advantage to a man by putting him upon the exertion of his talents for a livelihood, so the loss of a good name may become a blessing, by occasioning the most extraordinary displays of virtue to recover it again. I myself have seen numerous instances of the great benefits, resulting from the loss of character, some of those who had sustained this fortunate deprivation, having been driven to the most unheard of exercises of devotion, to regain the good opinion of society, and others getting on more smoothly than ever in the world, merely on the score of having no character at all. No one expected any good of them—none were disappointed; and they continued to maintain their station in the world, simply because it was impossible to fall any lower.

However this may be, it was my lot not long since, to spend a few weeks in a beautiful little village, which I would describe, were it not that it might possibly resemble some one with which the reader is acquainted, who would not fail to accuse me of personal allusions, of which I am perfectly unconscious. All I will venture to say is, that it lies along the bank of a pleasant stream, and such is its peaceful rural aspect, that it would seem to be the abode of ease, quiet, and happiness. The houses bespeak comfort

and competency, and the whitening spires indicate that here is dispensed that benevolent religion, which teaches us to love our neighbours, and be silent where we cannot commend. I never see such a picture, without indulging in those charming visions of rural happiness, which not even the lessons of a thousand disappointments, can effectually repress.

I had not been long in the village, before I received an invitation from Mrs. Rachel Sindefy, to drink tea with some of her friends. On showing the note to the friend to whom I was on a visit, he smiled significantly; congratulated me on the prospect of speedily becoming a member of the scandalous club, and declared his intention of going with me to take care of my morals. When the evening came, we accordingly knocked at the door of Mrs. Rachel Sindefy, and were ushered into a very snug parlour, round which were seated a number of respectable looking ladies, rather beyond the middle age; several young ones, who were undergoing a preparatory course of lectures; and some half a dozen antiquated beaux, I took to be bachelors on the score of their excessive gallantry to the ladies.

For some minutes after our entrance, not a word was uttered; several of the ladies sighed very audibly, and one of them ventured to take

a pinch of snuff, after which she handed the box to her next neighbour, who refused it with a grave shake of the head. I hinted to my friend, it seemed likely to turn out a quaker meeting. "Let them alone," replied he, "they hav'nt started their game yet—we shall hear the cry anon." Sure enough; the tea things, and the servants were hardly out of the room, when Mrs. Rachel Sindefy, carefully stroking the crumbs from her lap, turned to Mrs. Evervine, and began to say some very handsome things of one Mrs. Sellaway, the wife of a gentleman, who has lately built a fine house in the village, and lives in such a splendid style, that his wife is very much disliked by all her neighbours, having any pretensions to cut a figure themselves.

I never was fully aware of the danger of being praised, until now; and I take this opportunity to request all my friends, to refrain from this dangerous practice in future. The moment Mrs. Sindefy began her eulogium, I observed the nose and chin of Mrs. Evervine in a violent agitation, that put me in mind of a foaming steed champ-ing his bit, and longing for the chace—"Listen," whispered my friend, "we shall soon have an explosion." Poor Mrs. Sellaway came out of her hands a mere wreck. She was a very charming woman—but a little too free in her manners—

she was very charitable, but then she was so extravagant! She was very good natured, but weak people were generally so—she was very constant at church, but then she always had something new to show off on Sunday—she had a vast deal of taste, and her house was elegantly furnished—but it was a great pity she had gone to such an expense, when she *must* have known her husband could not afford it.” Here Mrs. Evervine stopt for a little breath, and one of the gentlemen very significantly observed, that Mr. Sellaway had offered to sell him his house a great bargain, and for his part he believed “there were pressing reasons for it.” Hereupon every body became very sorry for Mrs. Sellaway, and began to pity her with all their might, for being obliged to leave such a delightful establishment.

Mrs. Teresa Tidey, on hearing this last observation declared, “that though Mrs. Sellaway’s house was so elegantly furnished, somehow or other, she did’nt know hardly why, for her part, it never looked genteel to her. It never seemed to be put to rights, nothing looked in its place—and for her part she could safely say, you might always write your name upon the side-board and tables. For her part, she was no admirer of fine things, not she—she liked a neat house, for her part, and had ten times rather see

a white floor, that one might eat on, than a Brussels carpet with an inch of dirt under it." "Well spoken," whispered my friend, "that good lady to my certain knowledge, caused the death of two servants. One of them died of scrubbing the outside steps in a snow storm, and the other rubbed himself to death against a brass knocker, at the street door."

Having despatched Mrs. Sellaway, they proceeded to the dissection of various characters, and being now joined by the beaux, grew at length so scurrilous and scandalous, that I was several times put out of countenance, by certain inunendoes of Mrs. Sindefy, who observed of one lady, that "she was on her last legs," and of another, that "if she was not married, it was high time she should be." I was exceedingly scandalized at seeing persons of my own sex, give into this cowardly practice of wounding the female character, and hereby give them fair warning, if I ever hear of their amusing themselves in this cruel manner again, I will introduce them by name to the public, particularly the gentleman in the snuff-coloured coat, who told the story of the young couple, that took such long walks by moonlight.

The club being now entirely occupied with tearing characters to pieces, I took the opportu-

nity to inquire the history of some of these mischievous people, who partly from idleness, and partly from ill nature, thus amused themselves at the expense of all the social feelings and sweet charities of life. The information I received, I will give to the reader, as nearly as possible in my friend's own words.

“Mrs. Rachel Sindefy, the principal member of this association, formerly belonged to a knot of ladies, that spent their time in comparative innocence. They played at cards, and won each others money, instead of ruining reputations. By this means, they managed to kill their evenings, until a mischievous wag, wrote a lampoon, which entirely broke up the club, and brought about a most salutary reform. They joined a sort of sublimated tabernacle lately set up in the village, and now spend their leisure hours in scandalizing their neighbours, who go to theatres, and are guilty of the abomination of dancing French cotillions.”

Mrs. Teresa Tidey, is a busy notable dame of fifty, who after turning her house upside down, which she calls putting it to rights, and making every body miserable at home, generally sallies out, to see whether her neighbours' houses are in good order. The moment she enters a room, you will observe her reconnoitering every hole

and corner, and her little gray eyes brighten into extraordinary brilliancy, at the sight of a spot on the carpet, or a spider web suspended from the ceiling. A discovery of this kind, puts her in a good humour for the rest of the day; but wo to her household if she returns home without this gratification. She is reckoned a very good sort of a woman, but I have observed that none of her servants become attached to her, and that her husband enjoys himself particularly, in every ones house but his own."

"The precise lady seated next her, with a diamond ring on her finger, and dressed in gray poplin, is Miss Amy Flowerdew, who has particular claims to detestation. Possessing a small fortune, just sufficient to place her above the necessity of employment, and having no relish for books, she was for a long time at a loss for amusement, until she luckily discovered the secret of being busy at the expense of other people. Without ever having actually invented a scandalous story herself, she has injured more reputations, broke off more matches, and occasioned more quarrels, and heart burnings in the village, than the whole club besides. Her mode is peculiarly ingenious, and worthy of being studied by every candidate for the honourable distinction of a village gossip. She generally calls

twice or three times a week to see my wife, and though we had almost as soon see a cloven foot enter our doors, it is impossible not to be amused, with the adroitness of her manner of introducing a scandalous anecdote. It is a great improvement on that of Mrs. Candour.

Heigh ho—well Mrs. Cosey—it does not signify, but this is the most scandalous place in the world—Heigh ho—never was such ill natured people—I was just now at Mrs. Sindefy’s—dear me—I dont know for my part what this world is coming to, not I—some people are too scandalous to live—that’s my opinion. My dear Mrs. Cosey, I dont believe a word of it, and so I told Mrs. Sindefy—but what do you think I heard?” In this way she runs on, until she provokes some one to inquire what all this relates to; or if she fails in this, turns to, and voluntarily tells the story on purpose to vindicate the innocent objects of the calumny. Such is the sly, insidious way in which she tells the tale, and her admirable dexterity in mingling truth with falsehood, that though I dont believe any thing she says, but what I know to be true, I confess to my shame, her stories have more than once, thrown a shade over the reputation of a worthy family, and poisoned my mind with

doubts, which though I will not cherish, I cannot completely discard."

"The excessively polite gentleman in the snuff-coloured coat, who walks on tiptoe, for fear of looking little, is a widower, of about half a century old, but being on the alert for a young, rich and beautiful wife, all which he considers his extraordinary merits entitle him to expect, he does not wish to be thought more than five and twenty. If an allusion is made in company, where he happens to be present, to any event which took place more than a score of years back, the poor man is on thorns, least he should be referred to, and always retreats precipitately, recollecting a forgotten engagement of great consequence. He is withal the most ill natured being in the world, and revenges his numerous disappointments among the sex, by abusing in the most unmanly manner, every lady who is insensible to his merits, and every gentleman preferred to himself. In short my dear Anthony, were I to give you his picture in detail, you would infallibly pronounce me worthy of being a distinguished member of the association."

By this time there was a bustle for hats and cloaks, and the club shortly separated, to meet next evening at Mrs. Evervine's, where my friend and myself were invited. For my part, I

was resolved never to go near them again, being fully of opinion that it is better to pass the evening at cards, at the theatre, or even the tavern, than thus to banquet on the butchered characters of those with whom we are every day shaking hands, and exchanging the courtesies of social life. We are continually hearing, or seeing frothy declamations about the wretched, debasing and cruel superstitions of various idolatrous nations, and are vehemently urged for daily contributions, for the support of those who are said, to be gradually undermining these bloody rites. Might it not be well to institute a crusade against this worst species of human sacrifice, where the victim is not indeed crushed under the car of Juggernaut, nor offered up a voluntary burnt-offering, to the manes of a departed husband; but where she is subjected to cruel and lingering torments, that eat into the very soul, and poison the long moments of an intolerable existence? The cannibals of human flesh are nothing to the cannibals of human reputation; nor are those who offer up willing victims at the shrine of a mistaken faith, half so mischievously wicked as those who drag them unwillingly to a more painful sacrifice.

I must not omit to mention that the pastor of the tabernacle to which this flock belonged, and

who missed no opportunity, of declaiming stoutly against the abominations of balls, theatres, and fine clothes, was present all the evening, but never once attempted to give the conversation a better turn. If he ever sees this paper, I hope he will take example from a humble itinerant, I remember to have met with some years ago. This useful person had but one sermon to his back, and it was against scandal. Instead of changing his discourse every Sunday, he changed his audience, and by travelling all over the country, managed to give every body an excellent lecture on a vice, the most common, as well as the most pernicious of all others.

THE coincidence of the following letters is so singular, and the practices complained of by the writers so ill bred, not to say impertinent, that I hasten to lay them before the only tribunal, that can correct such offences. It may be useful also to the parties concerned to learn what they mutually think of one another.

TO MR. LANGSTAFF.

SIR,

I AM a young lady of considerable fashion, and having nothing particular to do at home,

amuse myself in walking up and down Broadway, to pass the time, which I assure you often hangs so heavily on my hands, that I sometimes almost wish I was married. Now pray sir, dont flatter yourself, I want you to help me to a husband, for I can help myself when I please, any day in the week, I thank you.

The object of this letter, is quite different. You must know, I generally pass the city hotel in Broadway about a dozen times a day, and this I used to do without the least pain to my modesty, until within a few days, that I have been much distressed and annoyed, by the behaviour of a young gentleman, that infests the south front door, where it seems he has taken up his permanent abode. He generally dresses in a blue frock, and has very pretty red cheeks, which makes me think he dont belong to the class of fashionable youths about town. For more than a week past, this young man contented himself with staring at me so intently as I passed by, that it very naturally excited my curiosity, and I believe I might sometimes have looked a little hard at him in turn. There was certainly no great harm in this, but yesterday afternoon as I was passing by, he had the impudence to smile, and give a familiar nod, as if I were an old acquaintance.

Pray Mr. Langstaff, publish this letter, that the gentleman may know from me his familiarity is disagreeable, and though I did sometimes look hard at him, it was nothing but downright curiosity.

Your constant reader,
BELLAMIRA QUEASY.

TO LAUNCELOT LANGSTAFF, ESQ.

*From my study, south door of the City Hotel,
Sept. 6th, 1819.*

SIR,

I AM a young fellow of an easy fortune, and a romantic turn of mind, travelling to see the world, and being addicted to retirement have for the present taken up my stay at the city hotel, where I indulge my solitary reflections, by sitting at the front door, and abstracting myself from the busy scene.

Here, I ponder on the uncertainty of life, the vanity of riches, and the emptiness of those pursuits of profit or of pleasure, which give life and motion to the bustling crowd, that flit before, like empty shadows, pursuing shadows still more unsubstantial than themselves. However, this is not the object of my addressing you. It cannot have escaped your observation, that

persons accustomed to deep abstraction, and intense thought, are in the habit of fixing their eyes steadily, on some particular object of whose presence they are totally unconscious at the time. Such is exactly my case. While sitting on the steps of the hotel, indulging myself in those abstract speculations that constitute the charm of my existence, and smoking a segar at the same time to condense my thoughts, I generally fasten my eye upon the different faces, as they pass in succession, until it becomes fatiguing to follow them any farther. I acknowledge my aptitude, as it were instinctively to select the prettiest faces on these occasions, although I hope to be believed, when I assure you, I would quite as soon gaze on the face of a brass knocker, as on the fairest features in the world.

Of late my abstract speculations have been exceedingly disturbed by a smart young lady, dressed in the extreme of the fashion, who trips by my hermitage from ten to fourteen times a day, and stares me in the face, as if I were a looking-glass. Indeed, I give you my honest word she has the hardest look of any person of her sex I ever saw, for she has made me blush more than twenty times, a thing I have not done before, since I left Alma Mater. The consequence of this persecution is, that I shall be shortly oblig-

ed to change quarters, unless the lady beats a parley, or takes to walking the other side of the street.

May I beg of you my good sir, to publish this letter, for the benefit of all the frequenters of this favourite place of study. I will thank you also, to give me your opinion, whether a young woman who stares a strange young fellow full in the face, without blushing, can be a modest person, unless she is very much in love with him?

I am sir, your obedient servant,

ANTHONY AIRCASTLE.

The foregoing letters being handed over to Evergreen, he gives it as his decided opinion, that the steps of a great hotel in a great city, where ladies are continually passing or repassing, is no place for young gentlemen to pursue their studies, or indulge in sentimental abstractions, with a segar in their mouths. With regard to the query at the close of Mr. Aircastle's letter, Evergreen is inclined to think that no young woman, who stares a strange young fellow full in the face, at the door of a hotel, can lay claim to any particular share of modesty, unless she is near sighted, or has fallen desperately in love with him on a sudden.

TO LAUNCELOT LANGSTAFF, ESQ.

SIR,

Being a great lover of music, I am seldom absent from a public concert, where I always go early to get a front seat in order to hear more distinctly. In this situation, I am regularly forced either to appear ill-bred, or give up my seat in consequence of a practice among underbred ladies, which I think it is quite time to demur to, as it has become a very serious grievance, to people who go to concerts to hear the music.

The custom among ladies of this second or third rate class, is to come into the concert room, when every body is seated quietly, and the music begun, and instead of taking the vacant seats in the rear, to elbow their way towards the front. Here they remain, till they have absolutely looked a sufficient number of gentlemen from their seats, and divided them from their party. The ladies who have taken the trouble of coming in season, are thus deprived of the company and protection of their friends, and at the same time intruded upon, by low bred strangers they never saw before. I remember one night making up a pleasant little party to hear Incledon, and being happily seated next a lady for whom I have long had a tender feeling, when just about the

middle of the first act, a party of these under bred people came in, and stared at such a rate at me and my friends, that I actually could stand it no longer and gave up a seat I would not have exchanged for a throne.

I will thank you sir, to let me know whether these hard looking ladies, are entitled thus to disturb a whole company by a game at moveall, and whether in your opinion a gentleman may pretend not to see them, without forfeiting his claim to good manners?

Your aggrieved servant,

ROGER BRICKBAT.

TO LAUNCELOT LANGSTAFF, ESQ.

SIR,

I wish with all my heart, you excellent old soul, that you would say a word or two about a class of vulgar young fellows, who pretend to be quite genteel, because they wear corsetts, and who go to concerts to exhibit themselves in front of the orchestra, and just between the audience and musicians. Here they drag themselves backwards and forwards between the acts, and during the music stand up before the company, like so many wooden statues.

The last time I was at a concert one of these live oak and whalebone gentleman, after stand-

ing like a post directly before me, during a whole act, at last suddenly whisked himself round, flirted the tail of his coat in my face, and then lounged off, without even looking round to see who was behind him. Pray sir, might not a lady on such an occasion be allowed to stick a pin into one of these insensible blocks by way of experiment?

Your devoted reader,

CLARISSA MERRIFIELD.

The two preceding letters, answered both in the affirmative by Anthony Evergreen.